

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND MOMENTS OF DESPAIR IN BUILT ENVIRONMENT

With special reference to Colombo Fort and Pettah

A dissertation presented to the

**FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE
UNIVERSITY OF MORATUWA
SRI LANKA**



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M.Sc. (Architecture)**

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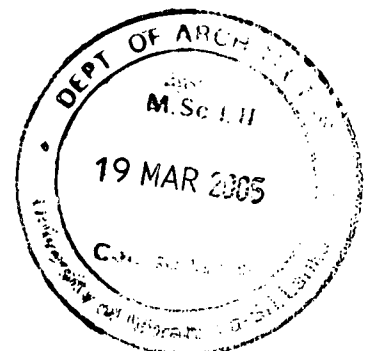
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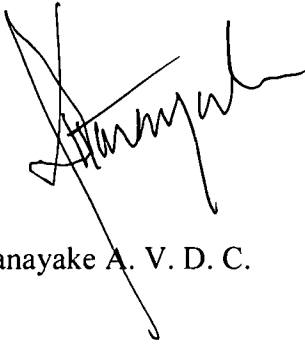
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Declaration

I certify that this dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any University and to the best of my knowledge it doesn't contain any material previously written or published or orally communicated by any person except where due reference is made in the text.



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Supervisor's signature

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Abstract

One's inner self is reflected on the built environment where one lives in. At present getting one's desires fulfilled, ignoring the spirituality of the place and limiting oneself into a single unit, each one bringing up an individual style of their own to bring about a catastrophe in the built environment in which case the built environment becomes a spiritless and meaningless entity. Once the places which had brought forth excitement had become lifeless. To bring about a change for the better, the point at issue is - no body is observing, no body is getting aware of the fact that the structure is falling down to pieces. *"What is change is first to be aware of what actually is and to live with it, and then one observes that the seeing itself brings about change."*(Krishnamurthi J., 1974, 52). Therefore, this study focuses to make people aware of the fact that the structure is falling down and how this deterioration could be overcome to bring about a structural quality which is not based on one's likes and dislikes.



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Introduction

Observations / issues identified

Prof Christopher Alexander states that a building or a town grows out directly from the inner nature of the people, who live in it (Christopher, 1979, 7). If this inner nature of people is in disorder, in violence and if it is not agreeable; the built structure or the outward expression of this inner becomes ugly, disturbing and disordered; reflecting the life style of the people.

Due to globalization, changes took place in the social structure in late 1950s. It provided the social system with the good and the bad. On one hand it made one so easy to get better living facilities and on the other as a whole it led one into disastrous living conditions. Imitation became a passion while making people more westernized. Within this change in the socio-economic system one finds that all the values within oneself are changing day by day. It is like there is no need to know one's neighbour, no need to respect for the totality. Even though the city is for "collective living", at present it is only to achieve one's personal goals, while living in this illusion "that we are individuals" and thinking one is free to fulfil himself. This sense of individuality brought difficulties in preserving the character of the built structure.

Criticality and the intention of the study

As a result, the present day Architecture came into being in Sri Lanka, that which is scaled to the number of people per unit; confusing the unity of the place while bringing ugly and unseemly built environment into existence, thus making it an abominable place to live in.

Garrett Harding in referring to The Tragedy of the Commons mentions; which appear good for each individual becomes harmful to the community (Nasar, 1998, 2). A city divides against itself. On television, news papers and all other media, there is beautiful and elegant making of architecture but one could experience the city is out of this elegance.

By analyzing these short comings and finding out the root of conflict this dissertation tries to reveal and discuss how those could be rectified to create a **sense of 'dwelling'** in the built environment.

Method of study

Architecture reflects the truth about itself. And it opens out the life of the people who live in a particular country. As Plato once mentioned, mind and the body are one and should not be treated separately - studying only the physical body of a work will exclude superior characteristics of humanity. Therefore one has to look into the whole structure of the society, its continuity of built structures from the past to the present.

Whatever the outer it is always the inner which overcomes the outer (Krishnamurthi J. 1974, 51). Society is always absorbing and projecting the individual. Therefore in order to sort out the power of entertaining ideas and communicating thought which reveal beauty and the meaning of a place, this study goes through the individual not through the society which is the outer.



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Therefore Analysis of concepts of selected theorists and a survey on physical setting and different social groups are carried out for the purpose of finding out this beauty and the meanings which supported by the social context; its history and environmental setting. This frame work is then interpreted to match with the physical study area.

Scope and limitations

The frame work of this study is focused on its physical study area. The boundary stretches over the Colombo Fort and Pettah.

Chapter format

Chapter one – The changing scenes of life

This chapter discusses the changes that had taken place in the social structure from early prehistoric days to the late 1940's with the fusion of the built environment which has brought forward meaningful life situations into being. And this provide the basic background for the second chapter.

In making this background, documentation always takes the holistic view [without referring to a more detailed analysis] of each change that had taken place in history.

Chapter two – Analysis of present moments in Colombo Fort and Pettah

One has to experience something before it is to be understood. Therefore this chapter is doing away with the social structure while analyzing the present reconstructions.



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Chapter three – Educating to see and feel

As a society one's daily living is in disorder. Which means in conflict. And it is well distinguished by the present day architecture. And this chapter focuses on the primary and secondary factors that have brought these conflicts into existence and thereby brings out a thought process which will be of help to overcome the present disasters.